

Sitting All Alone (You're Right in Front of Me) by ohnovaks

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Author's Note:

Title from Bittersweet Tragedy by Melanie Martinez!

The wind whistles it's all too familiar tune, humming along the branches and leaves of tall oak trees, leaving them shivering. The sound of everything was loud in 14 year old Eddie Kaspbrak's ears, insistant pounding and thrumming. The cloth of his fabric chafes at his skin, too tight, the rise and fall of his chest suffocated by warm cotton.

A nervous thrill ran up the axis of his spine like a lion chasing after an antelope, a fierce and fast movement. His hands were free from the confines of the large coat, opting to pick at the skin surrounding his nails; a habit he'd picked up for the moments that his heart beats so fiercely he can taste the blood of it on his tongue, feel it like bile in the back of his throat.

His chest aches with it, the beat pounding in his ears through his veins; it almost matches with the bang bang bang of his closed fist against the door, an icy pain of cold knuckles against wood. His fingertips are rosy red and trembling, dropping to his side as he waits.

With a magnificent shriek from the hinges, the door rocks open, a pale hand clasped over the doorknob. The hand belongs to Richie Tozier; tall and pale and freckled. Glasses always too big for his face, magnifying his round eyes and the dark eyelashes that swoop over his umber iris.

"I love you," Eddie confesses before a beat passes. The raven dark curls fall in oceanic waves over the surface of dotted skin, standing tall like a renaissance painting. Lips a bright pink, the shade of popping bubblegum, the shade of pink on the feathers of a flamingo. Much different to the pink that stained Eddie's cheeks and the tip of his nose, a peachier shade. "Okay," Eddie says when Richie doesn't speak, and he deflates like a balloon with a hole, stepping backwards to leave the wooden porch, boards creaking beneath his converse.

His heart pounds in his ears, rhythmic and tired, picking up the pace when a warm palm presses against the skin of Eddie's wrist, cold to the touch, coat riding up at the sleeve. Richie pulls him inside, and he stumbles a little as he follows the drift of the movement. He's afraid to speak, because the all too familiar heartbeat is blocking his airways, and he can hardly breathe.

His shaky fingers press against the plastic of his candy apple red inhaler, the span of his rosy lips around the end as he pumps artificial air down his throat. The taste on his tongue is bitter like an old pill, but it's familiar too; familiar in a way that nothing else is in that moment. Eddie avoids Richie's eyes, but he can remember what they look like so vividly that he curses himself for it; like tea with dribbles of honey and dots of sugar.

The shut of the door is loud and echoing in his ears, but then his back is against the painted wood of it in a movement somehow gentle and caring and still so assertive. Eddie has half the mind to expect lips against his own, perhaps chapped beyond relief but still so dreamily wonderful to feel, perhaps tasting of cotton candy and Lucky Charms.

But instead Richie sobs; one so loud and sudden that his body trembles, and he steps forward to pull Eddie into his chest in a embrace too emotional for the smaller of the two to process. "Richie," Eddie says when they pull away, reaching his hands up to stroke at the soft curls that crown his head, "Richie."

The taller boy is a wrecked angel; his eyes are swollen and red, hair falling over his forehead, face flushed a rosy pink. "Eddie I don't know," He breathes out all in one swift movement, moving his hands up to cover his crying face. "I don't know." Eddie doesn't know what he's talking about and thus has no way to stop him, so he just stares up at the taller boy, patiently waiting for explanation. The air still whistles outside, but it's muted now. "I don't know if it's okay for me to love you," Richie breathes out, choking on a sob after Eddie gently guides him to the living room so that they can sit on the fluffy, white carpet, "as much as I do."

Eddie sits cross legged in front of Richie, his nimble fingertips still rosy pink, reaching out for Richie's wrist. With a gentle tug, his hands are no longer covering his solemn face. He's beautiful in a way that is

common and constant, and Eddie recognizes it without addressing it to the forefront of his mind. "Richie," He says again, and all that he can say is his name, and all that he can see is his face. "You're okay."

Richie sobs, and Eddie's hand is pressed against his cheek, thumb stroking away his tears. "I love you so bad," Richie cries, hand catching Eddie's wrist, "I carved our initials in - in the bridge, I love you so much. Sometimes it hurts how much I love you."

"I love you," Eddie responds easily to his teenaged friend, and Richie stares at him, but almost through him. Eddie's round eyes flicker down to the curve of his mouth, rosy and round. "Can I kiss you?" He asks, eyes shifting back up to meet Richie's, honey and tea and sugar irises, "Would that be enough?"

Richie exhales deeply, and the tension drains with it, a movement so raw that another tear loosens itself from his eyelashes and trickles down the curve of his face. Slowly, he nods, and he mumbles something that he can hardly hear. Their heartbeats pound. Their lips connect.

The whistle of the wind still screams outside, but Richie can hardly focus on anything but memorizing how Eddie's lips feel against his own; they're youthful and soft, chapped, flavored like strawberry lip balm. When he pulls away he doesn't open his eyes, trying to savor the fireworks that explode beneath his eyelids. "Is that how it would really be?" Richie asks.

"I'd like to think so," Eddie says, voice deeper, and when Richie opens his eyes Eddie Kaspbrak is not fourteen, but forty. His skin longer, wrinkled, the scar of a stab wound on his cheek. "I'll see you again. When it's time."

"And until then?" Richie asks, and his voice is deeper too; he can't see himself, but if he could he'd see that his shoulders are wider and he has facial hair growing from his chin and his cheeks, and he is forty years old too.

Eddie laughs, and it holds no humor, but it's not sad either. His fingers are freezing cold, like holding hands with a corpse, and it sets in how ironic that fact is. "Don't be afraid to live. You know I want

you to be happy.” Richie nods, tears welling icily in his eyes.

He reaches out to touch Eddie, hug him maybe, but he evaporates like mist beneath his hands as Richie gasps awake; he is greeted by the shadowy darkness of his ceiling, the feeling of his thin sheet draped over his hot skin.

He is not fourteen, but forty years old, crying in his lonely bed in the corners of his too-big house where he lives alone in California.

And Eddie is not fourteen, but dead, decaying in the open tunnels beneath the lifeless little town of Derry, Maine.

“It hurts how much I love you,” Richie breathes out to the ceiling.

He can almost hear Eddie’s voice, fourteen years old, echoing back to him; “I love you.”